

Sayre (L.A.)

A SUCCINCT HISTORY
OF THE
PLAN OF TREATMENT
OF
POTT'S DISEASE
BY SUSPENSION
AND THE
USE OF PLASTER OF PARIS BANDAGE.

BY

LEWIS A. SAYRE, M. D.,

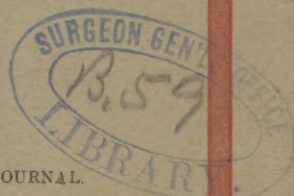
PROFESSOR OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY, FRACTURES AND DISLOCATIONS AND CLINICAL
SURGERY IN BELLEVUE HOSPITAL MEDICAL COLLEGE, NEW YORK.

FROM JANUARY NO. RICHMOND AND LOUISVILLE MEDICAL JOURNAL.

LOUISVILLE, KY.:

RICHMOND AND LOUISVILLE MEDICAL JOURNAL BOOK AND JOB STEAM PRINT,
104 Green Street, 2d door west of Post-office.

1878.



A SUCCINCT HISTORY
OF THE
PLAN OF TREATMENT
OF
POTT'S DISEASE

BY SUSPENSION
AND THE
USE OF PLASTER OF PARIS BANDAGE.

BY

LEWIS A. SAYRE, M. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY, FRACTURES AND DISLOCATIONS AND CLINICAL
SURGERY IN BELLEVUE HOSPITAL MEDICAL COLLEGE, NEW YORK.

FROM JANUARY NO. RICHMOND AND LOUISVILLE MEDICAL JOURNAL.

LOUISVILLE, KY.:

RICHMOND AND LOUISVILLE MEDICAL JOURNAL BOOK AND JOB STEAM PRINT,
104 Green Street, 2d door west of Post-office.

1878.

A Succinct History of the Plan of Treatment of Pott's Disease
by Suspension and the Use of Plaster of Paris Bandage.

AN OPEN LETTER.

*Dr. E. S. Gaillard, Editor of the Richmond and Louisville
Medical Journal.*

NEW YORK, December 6, 1877.

Dear Doctor,—As yours was the only medical journal in the country (so far as I am aware) that defended my character in my recent *absence* in Europe against the *foul slanders* and *false assertions* of the "Lexington Daily Press," of August 17, 1877, I have taken the trouble to collect all the facts and evidence in the matter, which I now forward to you, to prove to you and the world that you were correct in the honorable course you have pursued, and at the same time to thus publicly return to you my warmest thanks for your honorable, masterly and unanswerable defence.

For the past twelve years I have been in the habit of treating my patients who were suffering from Pott's disease and who were too poor to buy a Taylor's brace or any other expensive apparatus, by laying them on the stomach, and then extending them as much as possible, or until they were more comfortable than they were before, and then covering the entire back from pelvis to axilla with plaster of Paris, carrying it two-thirds, or even more, around the body, and securing it in front by elastic webbing. In cases of caries of the cervical vertebrae, I extended a branch of the shell up the neck, and the head being extended by an assistant, the plaster was carried well up under the occiput and half-way around the head, and secured in front by a ribbon or band passed around the forehead.

This plan of treatment I called "turtle-shelling," and all the students who have attended my lectures at Bellevue Hospital Medical College for the past ten years are perfectly familiar with it.

In the fall of 1874 a boy named Willie Pulver, between three and four years of age, was sent to me from Chatham Centre, Putnam county, New York, with Pott's disease of the two last dorsal and first lumbar vertebræ, with a very sharp angular curve—partial paralysis of the right leg—and very imperfect control of the bladder and rectum. As he was unable to stand up while Mr. Rynders measured his back for the purpose of fitting a "Taylor's brace," which I intended putting on him, I had my son lift him up by the arms while Mr. Rynders made the necessary measurement.

When he was thus held up his back became very perceptibly straighter, and I observed that he had more motion of his paralyzed right foot. This experiment was tried several times, with the same result at each suspension. As Mr. Rynders could not supply him with an instrument for some days, and the parents had to return to the country by the next train, and as I had no time to apply to him my "turtle-shell" dressing, I therefore concluded to apply a plaster of Paris bandage from pelvis to axillæ completely around the body, in order to get an accurate fitting mould, and then cut it down through the centre in front similar to "Darrach's celluloid jacket."

My son Charles got upon the sofa and held the boy suspended by the arms, while my assistant, Dr. L. M. Yale, pulled his flannel-shirt down between his legs, making it to fit him almost as tight as his skin. While he was thus held I applied the plaster bandages, using the same as we were in the habit of doing at Bellevue Hospital in cases of fracture.

At first we were all apprehensive that by completely encircling the thorax we might interfere with his respiration, but his lusty cries dispelled our fears, and I continued the bandaging from pelvis to axillæ, completely around the body, until several thicknesses had been applied. We then laid him upon the sofa until the plaster could "set," before dividing the shell. When we returned to him, in about half an hour, he had gotten off the sofa, walked across the office, and was standing by the window looking into the street. His mother stated that he had done this without any assistance.

I then divided the shell in front its entire length, secured the

lower or pelvic portion very tightly together by a firm and inelastic roller bandage, allowing the upper or thoracic portion to gap a little, and secured it by three elastic straps on each side, which were tied together sufficiently tight to give him firm support.

We all observed that he did not breathe as deeply or seem as comfortable after the division of the jacket as he did before it was divided. Still this did not make much impression on us at the time, and he was sent home with directions to return the following week and have the instrument applied, which Mr. Rynders was to make. The plaster was applied merely as a temporary expedient to get the child home comfortably, and was put on in the manner above described instead of by my usual mode of "turtle-shelling," because it could be done so much more quickly, and I was just then very much cramped for time.

The child did not return for his instrument the following week, as directed, and after some time had elapsed without my hearing from him, I applied it to another child whom it happened to fit. I never saw or heard from the child again until the 10th of March, 1875, when he was again brought to my office just as I was going to my clinical lecture at Bellevue Medical College, and I took him in the carriage with me to the college and exhibited him to the class.

The mother had returned with the child because he was bleeding slightly from the navel. Upon examination I found that I had left a thread of the plaster bandage uncut, and as the child had grown considerably stouter, it had chafed his navel, and produced quite a granular excrescence, which bled quite freely. This fungus mass was touched with nitrate of silver and dressed with styptic cotton, and the cuirass reëplied; telling the mother that she would have to get a new instrument made, as the one she had ordered had been given to another child, and as this plaster jacket seemed to do so well, she must keep it on until the "Taylor brace" could be made.

After the cuirass was reëadjusted the mother remarked that the child could stand, and when I asked her if he could not do so when it was off, she said no. I then removed it again before

the class and found that she was correct. After reapplying it the child could not only stand, but ran around quite lively without any assistance; and when the cuirass was off he could not even stand without support. I immediately became quite enthusiastic, and spoke probably rather extravagantly of its inestimable value, and prophesied that it would be the future treatment for Pott's disease.

This lecture was phonographically reported at the time by one of the students, now Dr. W. A. George, and published in the "Philadelphia Medical Times" of April 10, 1875.

From this time on I applied it almost every week in public at Bellevue, and in May, 1875, I applied it before the surgical section of the American Medical Association in Louisville, Kentucky, on a little child from Texas.

In January, 1876, my work on Orthopædic Surgery was issued by Appleton & Co., in which the process is fully described, and I was applying it almost daily at my office, a fact well known to many of the physicians in New York. And yet during all this time I never heard the name of Dr. Bryan mentioned in connection with this plan of treatment from a single human being, and never knew or heard that he had ever applied it in practice.

Dr. A. B. Judson, of this city, read a most valuable paper on "Rotary Lateral Curvature," before the Academy of Medicine, on April 6, 1876, and an anonymous correspondent of the "Louisville Medical News," in commenting on my remarks on this paper, refers to Dr. Joseph Bryan, of Lexington, Kentucky, as having ante-dated me in this plan of treatment. This was the first intimation that I ever had of his name in connection with the subject, and I immediately wrote him the following letter, which will explain itself, as well as my motive in writing:

285 FIFTH AVENUE, May 23, 1876.

Joseph Bryan, M. D., Lexington, Ky.:

Dear Doctor,—In the "Louisville Medical News" of May 20, 1876, on page 258, the "New York correspondent," in commenting on Dr. Judson's paper, read before the "New York

Academy of Medicine," on the "Causes of Rotation in Lateral Curvature," says "Dr. Sayre was delighted with it, and said he had been treating patients on this principle without being able to exactly define his reason.

He suspends his patients by supports under the occiput, chin, and shoulders, and while in this pendent state he puts on the plaster of Paris bandage. He seemed to lay claim to the plaster treatment in this disease, but I understand from a reliable informant that it was first proposed and used by Dr. Joseph Bryan, of Lexington, Kentucky, while on the staff of Bellevue Hospital."

Will you be kind enough to inform me the date when you first suspended a patient and applied the plaster of Paris bandage completely around the body from pelvis to axilla, and where I can find a published account of the same.

For many years I have treated "Pott's disease" by extension and plaster of Paris on the back, going half or two-thirds around the body, and then completing the front part by an elastic insertion. This plan I called "turtle-shelling," and I think you dressed a number of cases for me in this manner when you were in Bellevue Hospital, but I was not aware that you had ever applied the plaster completely around the body for either "Pott's disease" or "lateral curvature," or I certainly would have given you credit for the same.

And it is for the purpose of giving you full credit, and not claiming for myself what rightly belongs to another, that I ask for the above information. An early answer will greatly oblige,
Yours respectfully, LEWIS A. SAYRE.

The following is Dr. Bryan's reply:

LEXINGTON, KY., May 29, 1876.

Dr. Lewis A. Sayre:

Dear Doctor,—Yours of the 23d instant reached me to-day, and I take the earliest opportunity of answering. Some time during the months of July or August of 1874, I applied my first plaster of Paris splint to the back for "Pott's disease" of the spine. Patient's name was Rose Brennan, fourteen years old,

and the disease was situated in the second and third lumbar vertebræ.

On entering the hospital she was unable either to sit or stand on account of pain, and was run down in general health. The plaster of Paris dressing was suggested to my mind by the following conditions of case:

I could find no splint that would produce enough extension to take all the weight of body off the diseased bones; and second, I could find no splint that would take firm enough hold of the pelvis to completely prevent motion in the lumbar spine. The plaster was applied as follows: First, I had a flannel bodice made to fit the body evenly and smoothly, and extending from the axilla to trochanter major of femur. I then suspended her to the ceiling by supports under the axilla, using the old compound pulleys of Bellevue, and then applied the plaster all the way around the body, using narrow strips of zinc in making the splint like the ribs in a pair of corsets. I did this to make a light splint and at the same time give it the required amount of strength. My splint extended from the axilla to upper border of the trochanter major, taking firm hold of the pelvis and going all the way round the body. I have never seen your "turtle-shell" splint, and never had the opportunity of applying it for you while in Bellevue.

My case did remarkably well, and was able to sit up and walk about the very next day after the splint was applied; in three months she was perfectly cured. I have a photograph of it by Mason. Dr. Erskine Mason, Dr. Stephen Smith, Dr. V. P. Gibney, and Dr. B. J. Harlan, all of New York, saw it and were much pleased with it.

Dr. Harlan, my associate at the time in the hospital, used it in several instances and with good results. In a report of one of your clinics last winter, I saw that you supposed that you were the first to use it, and I intended to write you in regard to it, but neglected it, and finally forgot all about it. I do not know who the "New York correspondent" could have been. An account of my splint has never been published.

Am glad you wrote to me, Doctor, and trust that the splint

whoever be the author of it, will prove of advantage to the Profession in treating a very tedious and intractable disease.

Very truly yours,

J. W. BRYAN.

The following is an exact copy of the records of this case as taken from the books at Bellevue Hospital, and which I have only recently found:

Pott's Disease of Spine.—Ward 30, Dr. Shaw; House, Dr. Bryan, Senior; Dr. Bates, Junior. Rosanna Brennan, 15; single; United States; minor; admitted August 8, 1874; family history not good; patient's father died (in prison) of what disease she is ignorant. Mother perfectly healthy; has had two brothers and two sisters; both brothers dead; one died of disease of the spine or hip, does not know which; patient does not know cause of other brother's death. Of the two sisters, the younger one has always been healthy; the elder when almost eighteen years old had a cough which lasted her a long time, but of which she finally recovered. Patient says that she, herself, has always been perfectly well until about three months ago, when she began to have pains in her back, more especially in the lumbar region. She applied for relief at the Forty-second-Street Hospital, when it was found she had a prominence of spine in lumbar region and very tender. She also complained of pain extending down her lower extremities. The doctor at Forty-second street told her she had disease of the spine, and fitted and applied a spinal splint, but it did not relieve the pain, and she therefore came to this hospital. On examination, discovered a prominence in lumbar region, probably at fourth and fifth lumbar vertebræ. Pressure on the prominence gives her intense pain. Patient is unable to stand, and says it gives her a great deal of pain to stand long. While in the standing posture pressure of shoulders gives her pain. Patient appears fairly nourished; appetite not very good; says she does not sleep very well.

August 16.—Dr. Mott saw the patient and ordered a seton put in the back near the point of tenderness. To-day carried out Dr. Mott's directions and put an issue-pea near point of tenderness, and applied the spinal brace, made by Dr. Knight's direction, of Forty second-Street Hospital. Patient complained of pain during the afternoon, and had to go to bed again.

August 21.—Applied her splint again to-day, but she complained so much of pain that we had to remove it again. Determined to apply a plaster of Paris splint.

August 22.—Applied a plaster splint extending from axilla to one inch above trochanter major, so if possible to prevent any movement in the lumbar region of spine.

August 24.—Had a fenestra cut out over the point of the prominence, so as to be able to dress the issue daily. Patient feels perfectly comfortable with her splint on; is to-day up and about the ward; general condition good.

August 31.—Since the application of the plaster of Paris splint patient has done remarkably well; suffers no pain and is able to be up and about the ward all day. General health excellent; takes cod-liver oil and iron, and a generous diet.

September 10.—Since date of last note patient has been up and about all the time. She, however, complains of severe pains in her legs and in her upper extremities, but do not think they are referable to her spinal disease. Issue is dressed daily, and discharges considerable; patient's general condition excellent.

September 17.—Patient still continues to do remarkably well; issue discharges considerably; is dressed by nurse daily.

October 10.—Patient has been doing finely; is about the ward daily; walks without crutches, and suffers no pain in the back whatever; issue still kept open.

This is the last note of the case. From the above description of the case, taken from the hospital records, it does not appear that Dr. Bryan is entitled to any more credit than Dr. Shaw, house-surgeon, or Dr. Bates, junior assistant; there is certainly no evidence that the patient was suspended in the manner I advise to be done while the jacket is being applied; and there was also an issue put in her back, which I certainly do not advise; therefore I can see no similarity in the plans of treatment.

In looking over the photographic gallery of Mr. Mason, connected with the hospital, I find a card ordering the picture of this case to be taken, signed by Dr. Shaw, and counter-signed by Dr. A. B. Mott; Dr. Bryan's name not appearing on the order or on the photograph. Notwithstanding this absence of all evidence in the records of the hospital to sustain Dr. Bryan's

claim, and based simply on his statement in the letter above quoted, that he had thus treated a case of Pott's disease, I made the following statement in my "report on Pott's disease," read at the meeting of the American Medical Association in June, 1876, at Philadelphia, and which will be found on page 585 of their transactions for that year.

"Having recently understood that Dr. Joseph Bryan, of Lexington, Kentucky, had used plaster of Paris in this way in the treatment of Pott's disease prior to my first application of it, I wrote to Dr. Bryan on May 23, 1876, asking for information on the subject, and where I could find an account of the same." He replied in a letter dated Lexington, Kentucky, May 29, 1876: "Some time during the months of July or August, 1874, I applied my first plaster of Paris splint to the back for Pott's disease of the spine. * * * * * An account of my splint has never been published. * * * * * The case was shown, according to Dr. Bryan, to Drs. Erskine Mason, Stephen Smith, V. P. Gibney, and B. J. Harlan, who were much pleased with it; *but as no account of it was ever published, and as none of the gentlemen mentioned seem to have been sufficiently impressed with its importance to put it into practical use, I must at least claim priority in bringing it before the profession and into general use, and was not aware of Dr. Bryan ever having applied it until I received his letter of May 29, 1876, or I should have given him credit for it in my previous publications upon this subject.*"*

This same quotation was republished in a very large edition of the "Richmond and Louisville Medical Journal" for May, 1877, and is also inserted in full in my work on "Spinal Disease and Spinal Curvature—their treatment by suspension, and the use of the plaster of Paris bandage"—recently published by Smith, Elder & Co., of London, and J. B. Lippincott, of Philadelphia

I therefore claim that I have given full credit to Dr. Bryan in every publication of mine upon this subject, since the first time that I ever heard his name mentioned in connection with

* The italics have been added to the quotation.

it. I feel quite confident that every honorable member of our profession will agree with me in this opinion.

Notwithstanding this fact, the "Lexington (Kentucky) Daily Press," of August 17, 1877, published during my absence the following foul slander against my character:

"Dr. Lewis Sayre—How he Claimed an Invention that belonged to another—Something about Bryan's Process.—The name of Dr. Lewis Sayre is not unfamiliar to the people of Lexington. As a surgeon he has some reputation. He is an industrious, pushing man, who knows the value of an advertisement, and does not underrate the effect of self-assertion. It is supposable that a man who has earned as much glory in the course of his brilliant career would hesitate to rob a young practitioner of the honors he had fairly won. Yet this, or something like it, appears to be the case.

"Some time in 1874, Dr. Jos. Bryan, a young physician now practicing in this city, was in charge of one of the wards of Bellevue Hospital, New York. Among his patients were several suffering from Pott's disease of the spine, better known as curvature of the spine. The young surgeon had great commiseration for these sorely-afflicted people, for hitherto the disease had been incurable, and the sufferers, with a slowly decreasing power of enjoying life, died in the greatest pain. Dr. Bryan conceived the idea that by lifting the super-incumbent weight off the diseased spot in the spine, and keeping the body in that attitude, it might not only relieve the pain, but bring about a cure. The practice had heretofore been to send a patient to an instrument-maker, and the result was mechanical appliances without much beneficial effect. He concluded to try an experiment with a plaster of Paris splint, the material being strong and rigid. The first patient operated upon was a girl sixteen years of age. She was placed sitting upon a stool, and then a rope attached to pulleys in the ceiling was passed under her arms, and the weight of her body above the diseased part of the spine was gradually lifted up. When the pain was entirely relieved by this process, and the spine somewhat straightened, a plaster of Paris jacket was put on, resting upon the hips and gradually built up to armpits, strips of zinc

having been put in, like ribs in a corset, to make the splint tougher and lighter. When the plaster had hardened, the rope was removed, and the weight which it sustained was now supported by the plaster splint, which had the additional advantage of allowing no lateral motion to disturb the natural healing process. In a surprisingly short time the case was a permanent cure. In the other instances the splint was applied with remarkable success. Dr. Bryan made no publication of his discovery. He intended to watch the effects still further, and note many cases before giving his observations to the world. He left the hospital without having advertised himself or his success.

"Dr. Lewis Sayre was an attendant physician at the hospital, and of course saw Dr. Bryan's process and its effect. Some time after the young man had left for his Kentucky home, Dr. Lewis Sayre made one of the splints and lectured upon it to his class, claiming the invention as his own. Afterwards at the meeting of the American Medical Association at Philadelphia, Dr. Sayre exhibited the splint and read a paper on the subject, again claiming the invention as his own. Some of the surgeons who were present and knew the facts exposed the assumption, and the great surgeon had to admit that he had laid claim to what did not belong to him. Now he is in London with this same invention, or, as it is called, "Sayre's Process," curing curvature of the spine, and coining money off the result of another man's brains. If he had given to the operation the name of the inventor, it might be some recompense to the youthful enthusiast. But no; without a shadow of authority he has given to it his own name.*

"Dr. Bryan is a man who makes few pretensions. He is modest and capable, and of his own motion would not open his lips upon a matter that so nearly concerns him. He has been quietly and very successfully experimenting with his plaster splint, making improvements as his added experience suggests, until now it is one of the greatest boons to suffering humanity. But the story is instructive as showing how some men accumulate reputation."

* The italics are mine.

Two of the above assertions, which I have *italicised*, are *positively and absolutely false*, and no one knows this fact better than Dr. Bryan himself. He knows perfectly well that in the reorganization of the Bellevue Hospital Medical Board in 1874, that I was not put in that Board, and was not appointed in the new Board until January, 1876. I was also absent from the city from the 2d of August, 1874, to the 15th of October; and on my return to the city finding that I had been removed from the hospital, of course I did not go into it, and therefore could not have seen his case; and this fact Dr. Bryan must know perfectly well, for he was connected with the hospital at the time, as he says in his letter to me that he showed his case to Dr. Erskine Mason, the very surgeon who was appointed to fill my place.

The *second falsehood* is in relation to the transaction at the meeting of the American Medical Association in Philadelphia. *No such occurrence as is here described ever took place there.* And Dr. Bryan also knows this fact perfectly well, for I sent him, myself, a copy of my report on this subject, being a reprint of the "transactions," and in it, as will be seen by referring to page 585, full and ample justice was done to Dr. Bryan—voluntarily on my part—and *no member* of the Association called my attention to him, as here described. In fact, his name was not mentioned by any one but myself, and that was in my report. I appeal to the records of the Association and to every member of the profession who was present at that meeting, to prove that the assertion in the "Daily Press" is *wholly and absolutely false*, and *without even the slightest shadow of a foundation.*

The slander and falsehoods above referred to appeared in a daily newspaper, during my absence from the country, and the paper was issued in the city of Lexington, Kentucky, where Dr. Bryan resides. It is hardly possible, therefore, that he could have been ignorant of it. One would naturally suppose that he must certainly have heard of it in so small a city as Lexington, or probably even seen the article. How he can reconcile it to his conscience as a man, or sense of justice and honor as a gentleman, to allow it to go *uncontradicted* when he knew

it to be false, as I have proved above that he must have known, I leave it for him to answer before the bar of professional and public opinion.

In my report to the American Medical Association in 1876, and in all my publications on the subject since, I have given Dr. Bryan credit for priority in this plan of treatment, and claimed for myself simply "*priority in bringing it before the profession and into general use.*" I now find that I have been wrong in this respect, and have given Dr. Bryan credit for what he is not entitled to, for he was preceded by Dr. St. John in 1871, who put up a case of caries of the spine, at my suggestion, with plaster of Paris, and also treated a case of fracture of the ribs by carrying the plaster of Paris bandage *completely around the body.* (See "American Journal of Medical Sciences" for July, 1872, pages 100-101.)

Dr. Bryan, therefore, has no right to claim priority in this plan of treatment, and as he never gave to the Profession even the little that he did do, he has no right to claim anything whatever in connection with it.

As I have proved above that *I could not have seen* Dr. Bryan's case in the hospital, I must therefore, if I received my views from him, have obtained the information from some one of the four persons to whom he says in his letter he showed the case, viz: Drs. Mason, Gibney, Harlan, and Stephen Smith. In order to be positive upon this subject I wrote to them for information, and append their answers. I have received no reply from Dr. Harlan, although I addressed my second letter to Columbia, Tennessee, where Dr. Bryan wrote me that he now resided.

135 242D STREET, NEW YORK, Nov. 9, 1877.

Lewis A. Sayre, M. D.:

My Dear Doctor,—Yours of the 6th inst. reached me only yesterday, and in reply to your question whether I ever spoke to you of Bryan's case, or described his mode of treatment prior to November, 1874, I can safely say that I did not speak to you of his case prior to November, 1874, and that I have *never* described the method publicly.

I remain yours truly,

V. P. GIBNEY.

113 WEST FOURTH ST., November 8, 1877.

Professor Lewis A. Sayre, M. D.:

Dear Doctor,—In reply to your note of November 6th, received to day, asking me if I ever described to you Bryan's mode of treatment of Pott's disease prior to November, 1874, I would say, I have no recollection of ever speaking to you on this subject. Yours truly, ERSKINE MASON.

NEW YORK, 52 WEST 42D ST., November 8, 1877.

Professor Sayre:

My Dear Doctor,—In reply to your note of the 6th inst., I would reply that I have no recollection of having spoken to you in regard to the case of caries of the spine treated by Dr. Bryan previous to November, 1874, nor subsequently until within the present year.

The case was treated in my division, but attracted no special attention, as plaster of Paris was then being employed in a great variety of cases in Bellevue Hospital. It certainly had no other relation to the present systematic treatment of spinal caries by gypsum than ante-dating its present general employment. Even in that respect it has no special merit, for Dr. St. John, house-surgeon of the same division, applied the plaster of Paris to a case of caries of the spine as early as 1871. (See his paper in "American Journal of Medical Sciences," July, 1872, page 101.) Very truly yours, STEPHEN SMITH.

On referring to the very elaborate and most valuable paper of Dr. St. John on "Plastic Apparatus and Surgery," to which Dr. Smith alludes, I find that he has *ante-dated* both Dr. Bryan and myself in *completely encircling the body* in plaster of Paris bandage in case of fractured ribs in 1871. And on page 101, of his paper, I found the following sentence: "In one case I applied a gypsum apparatus, *at the instance of another surgeon, as a brace in incipient caries of the spine,** but was not able to follow up the case." I therefore wrote to him asking for the name of the surgeon to whom he referred, and received the following letter in reply:

* The italics are mine.

214 WEST 43D STREET, Nov. 12, 1877.

Dr. L. A. Sayre:

Dear Doctor,—Yours of yesterday, asking about the application of plaster of Paris in Pott's disease, alluded to in my article in the "American Journal of Medical Sciences," 1872, is just at hand. I have no claims whatever in the matter. The case alluded to was one of your own (as you surmised), and you invited me to apply the apparatus, as I was then serving as interne in your wards at Bellevue Hospital, and you were kind enough to consider me tolerably adroit in the use of that method of surgical appliance. The case, as I remember it, was a lad of fifteen or seventeen years—slight knuckle in dorsal region. We made a sort of turtle-shell, extending from neck to sacrum, and covering the posterior half of the body only. The intention was to have it laced up in front, but I never saw it after the day when it was made, and I do not know whether that was done; nor have I ever heard how it served the purpose for which we intended it.

As I said at first, I have nothing to claim except, perhaps, your indulgence for not having said "Dr. Sayre" instead of "another surgeon," in my paper. Had I known that it was the initial step to such a valuable improvement in surgical science as the "plaster jacket" for "Pott's disease" has proved to be, you may be assured I would not have omitted the name.

So far as I can find out, I was the first to use the plaster apparatus for *fracture of the clavicle, fracture of the ribs, and dislocation of the clavicle* (acromial end) upwards, and for an apparatus for treating exsection of the hip, to take the *place of the wire breeches*. I also suggested extension by means of your extension splints, having the rings embedded in plaster applied, through which extension might be made on the *dorsum pedis* and on the pelvis.

Yours very truly,

S. B. ST. JOHN.

The "Lexington Daily Press," after referring to the above case of Rosanna Brennan, says: "In the *other instances* the splint was applied with remarkable success."

This sentence, when taken in context with another part of

the article, which says: "Among his patients were *several* suffering from Pott's disease of the spine, better known as curvature of the spine," would lead the reader to infer that Dr. Bryan had applied this treatment in a number of cases. Dr. George F. Bates, of No. 161 West Twenty-third street, who was Dr. Bryan's assistant in the hospital, writes me that he assisted Dr. Bryan in the application of the plaster Paris bandage to Rosanna Brennan, and also in one other case, "a sailor named Frank Clifford, in ward 2" (a transfer from ward 5), and closes his letter with the following sentence: "The above were the *two*, and the *only* cases in which Dr. Bryan used the plaster dressing for Pott's disease during his service as interne in Bellevue Hospital."

In Dr. Bryan's letter to me of May 29, 1876, he says: "I have never seen your 'turtle-shell' splint." This may be true but it only shows that he was not very observant of what was being done in the hospital quite frequently and was quite familiar to the rest of the staff, as will be seen by the following letter just received from one of the former house-surgeons, and which was sent to me unsolicited and unexpected:

101 NORTH SIXTH ST., NEWARK, NOV. 23, 1877.

Professor Lewis A. Sayre:

Dear Doctor,—Having noticed some discussion in reference to the time you first used the plaster jacket (turtle-shell, as you then called it), it may be of interest to you to know that I "put up" a case of Pott's disease of spine for you in this way during my service as interne at Bellevue Hospital from April, 1871, to April, 1873.

I remember the case well; it was a child in ward 30, second surgical division, and your directions were as follows: The child was to be placed across my knees, face downwards, the arms hanging over one knee, the thighs over the other; then, by gradually abducting my thighs, I was to make extension *until the child was easy*, and the back in good position, when plaster of Paris and an old blanket were applied, nearly meeting in front. This was allowed to dry with the child still in position, and the edges were then bound, and elastics inserted

in front. The child experienced great comfort from this apparatus, and was able to go about the ward. I remember one case, a fractured rib, which was treated during the same service by a plaster bandage going *entirely around* the chest.

I am quite sure, moreover, that the case I referred to above was not the first or only one treated in this way at the hospital; I think it had been used, perhaps, during Dr. St. John's service, as he belonged to the second surgical division also.

Allow me to congratulate you on the splendid success of this method in the form in which you have developed it, and on the unanimous acceptance of your demonstrations by the English surgeons last summer.

Very sincerely,

GEORGE A. VAN WAGENEN, M. D.,
House-Surgeon Bellevue Hospital, 1871-73.

The "Lexington Daily Press" says: "Dr. Bryan made no publication of his discovery. He intended to watch the effects still further, and note many cases before giving his observations to the world." This sentence would lead us to infer that Dr. Bryan was still experimenting with this plan of treatment, and intended to give it to the profession so soon as he had perfected it and proved it to be useful. By referring to Dr. Bryan's letter to me of May 29th, 1876, it will be seen, as he says, he had "forgot all about it," and could not therefore have been very much interested in it, according to his own testimony. And it will be seen by the following letter from him to me that he had not again put it in practice up to the 5th of March, 1877:

LEXINGTON, KY., March 5, 1877.

Dr. Lewis A. Sayre:

Dear Doctor,—Yours of the 28th of February reached me yesterday. In reply, I must say, that being a party in the question, I am not in a position to decide as to whether you have done me perfect justice in regard to the "plaster jacket" in your book. *Elsewhere, as far as I am able to judge, you have given me all the credit due me.* Am glad to know the splint is becoming so popular with physicians. I believe now,

as I have always believed, that it is capable of doing great good in capable hands. The great trouble will be, however, in getting physicians to understand its proper application. It has been used here by a physician in one case, but was not properly applied, and consequently failed to accomplish the desired object. Hoping you will succeed in your endeavor to popularize the splint, and in the end get physicians to apply it properly,

I remain your affectionate pupil and friend,

JOSEPH BRYAN.

As my book to which he refers was published in 'January, 1876, nearly three months before I ever heard of his name in connection with the subject, I certainly can not be censured for not referring to him, particularly as he distinctly states that he never published an account of it anywhere, and only showed it to four other persons, three of whom have written to me that they did not speak to me on the subject, and the fourth one, Dr. Harlan, having removed from the city, I have been unable to find. Dr. Bryan says: "*Elsewhere, as far as I am able to judge, you have given me all the credit due me.*" As I distinctly published in the paper here referred to that "I was not aware of Dr. Bryan ever having applied it until I received his letter of May 29, 1876, or I should have given him credit for it in my *previous* publications on the subject," I must insist upon my right to assert that I have done Dr. Bryan *no injustice*; but, on the contrary, have given him full justice, as I have always conscientiously endeavored to do to every other member of our honorable profession. Having now given all the facts in connection with this subject, I leave it to the profession, whose judgment, I am convinced, will always side with honor, truth, and justice.

I hope those journalists who have done me injustice and great professional injury by publishing vile slander, will at least take the trouble to read this evidence, and then make such comments as a sense of honor and justice demands.

Again thanking you for your great kindness in allowing me to occupy so much space in your valuable journal,

I remain your grateful friend, LEWIS A. SAYRE.

285 Fifth Avenue, November 25, 1877.

Addenda.—Since the above was sent to the press, I have received a letter from Dr. Harlan in answer to my second letter, dated Columbia, Tennessee, November 23, 1877, in which he states that he did speak to me of "Bryan's method of treating Potts' disease very soon after he applied the splint to his first case." As I could not recall the conversation, and as I was absent from the city from the 4th of August until the 12th of October, in 1874, I wrote the Doctor the following letter, to see if he could possibly connect it with some incident or circumstance by which my memory would be refreshed :

285 FIFTH AVENUE, November 26, 1877.

Dr. B. J. Harlan :

Dear Doctor,—Yours of 23d instant just received. I have not the slightest recollection of your speaking to me of Bryan's method of treating "Pott's disease," and will feel deeply obliged if you could possibly refresh my memory by referring to any incident occurring in the conversation, where it took place, and as nearly as possible when, what month, etc., etc.

It is singular that what I consider so important a subject could have been described to me so as to make me understand it, and that I should have so perfectly forgotten it. The first I ever knew of the subject was in a letter from Bryan himself, in 1876, in answer to mine about the anonymous correspondent of the "Louisville News." I wish you could inform me where and when you told me, who was present, or refer to anything by which I can recall it to mind.

Please answer immediately.

Yours truly,

LEWIS A. SAYRE.

I have just received the following reply :

COLUMBIA, TENN., November 30, 1877.

Dr. Lewis A. Sayre :

Dear Sir,—Your favor of the 26th instant received. The conversation I had with you about Bryan's treatment of Pott's disease took place in your office; *I think there was a lady and her little girl present; I believe you were applying electricity to*

*the girl's leg.** I can not state with any degree of accuracy in what month or at what season of the year the visit was made. In your article in the Transactions of the American Medical Association, after quoting from Bryan's letter to you, you go on to say that none of the gentlemen mentioned seemed to think much of the apparatus. When Bryan first used it, he told me how much it had relieved the patient, and took me to see the apparatus. As soon as it was explained to me and I had seen it in use, I then and there, and several times afterwards, earnestly urged Bryan to write an article for some journal on the subject. He always replied that he expected to do so when he had had more experience with the apparatus.

I used the same apparatus on a patient under my care for an injury to the spine in October, 1874. I did not suspend the patient, as that part of the treatment I did not think needed in his case. Name of patient was Charles Walker, and you will find a meagre history of his case in the Hospital Records of the second surgical division for 1874. I only write these personal details to let you know that I had sense enough, when the matter was explained to me, to see what an immense improvement it was on all previous methods of treating Pott's disease.

Yours truly,

BENJ. J. HARLAN.

As I am not accustomed to have strangers present when I am engaged in so delicate an operation as the application of electricity to the leg of a young lady, I deem further comment on the above letter entirely unnecessary. Again, Dr. Bryan applied his splint August 22, 1874. I was then absent, and did not return until October 15 of that year. Dr. Harlan could not have mentioned the matter to me "very soon after" the splint was applied. Shortly after I returned, I applied the plaster of Paris jacket upon Willie Pulver at the store of Mr. Reynders, in this city. These are succinctly the facts, and I leave them with the professional public.

* The italics are mine.

PERIODICAL MEDICAL LITERATURE.

Interesting to Physicians.

Every physician who is just to his patients and to himself must read faithfully and regularly the periodical medical literature of the day. It is only thus that he can learn quickly and correctly all of the improvements constantly taking place in every department of his Profession. To all who thus seek to make themselves most efficient in practice and most successful in competition, the undersigned offers the

Richmond and Louisville Medical Journal.

This work is issued monthly, and has now reached its twenty-fifth volume. It is clearly printed on rose-tinted paper, which is not only agreeable to the eye, but safe, as the superfluous rays of light are absorbed by it, and are not painfully and injuriously reflected. The pages of the Journal have been increased in size, and there are now issued every year two volumes, making an aggregate of one thousand one hundred and fifty-two (1,152) pages. The cost of both volumes is but five dollars (\$5.00) annually, with twenty five cents added for the yearly postage. Medical works of this size cost usually double the price mentioned, and are issued on paper inferior to that on which the Journal is printed. This Journal has always embodied the best articles from the best physicians in this country. Its selections are made from original European journals, and from the best medical periodicals of this country. Its exchange list is large, and includes not only all American journals, but the best of those published abroad. The reader obtains thus every month a condensed report of all that is valuable in American and European medicine. In addition, there is furnished the professional proceedings of medical societies; reports of interesting clinical cases; letters from European and American medical centres; reviews of all the new works; miscellaneous extracts; the medical news of the day; chemical and pharmaceutical literature; and editorial comments upon topics of current interest. The circulation of this Journal is much larger than that of any medical journal in the South, and the work is read by the leading members of the Profession. Specimen numbers twenty-five cents each.

There is also offered to the medical public, by the undersigned, the

AMERICAN MEDICAL BI-WEEKLY.

This Journal (as the American Medical Weekly) was founded July 4th, 1874, and is now permanently established. It is mailed invariably every other Friday night (there has not been a single failure), and reaches its subscribers regularly. It is printed on paper similar to that used for the Monthly. Its exchange list is equally large. Its pages are made up in double columns, and the subscriber receives this enlarged work for the small sum of three dollars (\$3.00) annually, with an addition of ten cents for the year's postage. The Bi-Weekly is issued in two volumes yearly; each volume having a complete index. Medical works of such size cost fully twice the price asked for this Journal. It contains original articles; extracts from foreign and domestic journals; reviews of new books, pamphlets, monographs, etc.; correspondence from European and American medical centres; the news of the day fresh and comprehensive; and editorial matter. Under no circumstances is the same material used for the two Journals; they are entirely different in the matter presented.

These Journals are owned and edited solely by the undersigned, and are therefore managed with consistency and care. They are independent of all corporations, and are strictly organs of the Medical Profession of this country.

Contributions for both Journals are respectfully requested. Those who have not the time or inclination to write formal articles can furnish matter of value in the form of letters. Every one observes something of interest, and all such facts should be given to the Profession.

E. S. GAILLARD, M. D.,

163 Second Street, Louisville, Ky.